



Representative Scott Plakon

House District 37

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 11, 2009

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REPRESENTATIVE PLAKON ADVANCES AIR SAFETY AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION LEGISLATION

TALLAHASSEE – Legislation to protect the safety of air travelers and preserve Florida’s wildlife was approved by the House Roads, Bridges & Ports Policy Committee today. House Bill (HB) 1065/Senate Bill (SB) 1864, known as the Airline Safety and Wildlife Protection Act of Florida, is sponsored by Representative Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) in the House and Senator Carey Baker (R-Eustis) in the Senate.

“I am very proud to introduce this legislation in the Florida Senate,” said Senator Baker. “With the recent downing of US Airways Flight 1549, the issue of bird strikes in this country is on everyone’s mind. It only makes sense that Florida ensures that those who choose to travel in our state can do so with the benefit of knowing we are doing all that is possible to ensure their safety.”

“The purpose of this legislation is to protect the health, safety and well-being of the traveling public,” said Representative Plakon. “Additionally, this legislation will insure that airport leaders and employees can do their best to keep us safe without fear of prosecution and sanctions as they operate under their proper permits.”

The Airline Safety and Wildlife Protection Act of Florida encourages the safe and biologically sound management of wildlife resources on Florida’s public use airports so that managers and operators clearly meet the legal responsibilities placed on them by overlapping federal, state and local regulations. The bill provides the completion of a wildlife assessment of hazards at the airport and implementation of a wildlife hazard plan.

“There is currently a paradox in the laws that we must follow, on one hand we are mandated to disperse wildlife and on the other hand we are told that if something tragic happens to a protected animal we would be held liable.

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Airport personnel should not be fearful of prosecution in doing what is necessary to keep people safe and that just isn't right," said Larry Dale, CEO of the Orlando Sanford International Airport.

Jerry Allen, Deputy Director of Palm Beach International Airport, stated, "We need this type of assurance codified in State law. It is imperative that we do everything possible to protect the safety of the traveling public without fear of criminal prosecution or administrative investigations and penalties while we are acting within the scope of our permits or FAA authority."

"The safety of the traveling public is our number one priority. With the help of our state legislators we will be able to continue focusing on this issue while also effectively managing our wildlife," says Steve Gardner, Executive Director for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority.

Greg Donovan, Airport Director, Northwest Florida Regional Airport concluded, "Ensuring safe environments for aircraft operations is paramount. The traveling public must have confidence in our air transportation system and have absolute reassurance in knowing that all measures to eliminate safety hazards are taken. Otherwise, the perception could detrimentally affect the decision to travel by air and impede access to Florida. I am excited about this bill and look forward to speaking with members of both houses about this important issue."

HB 1065 will next be heard in the House Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council.

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